



*Guest senior travel writer PKL, Toronto, Canada:* On a recent tour of London, we spent time in ten-century-old Westminster Abbey on Parliament Square. Long admirers of British history, we wanted to experience it first-hand. This is where famous poets, kings, queens and warriors from all those centuries now rest in glorious memory.

The center aisles of the church are where royal weddings and funerals are held. Now in her 90th year, Queen Elizabeth II was married there in 1947. Seeing the chapel was a sad reminder that it's also where Princess Diana's funeral took place nearly two decades ago. Although the Abbey was crowded with tourists on the day of our visit, there was a respectful quiet throughout as we made our way from one historic area to another.

A popular pause for visitors is at the tomb of Queen Elizabeth I, with her lifelike effigy atop the coffin. She's in the Lady Chapel, where nearby are the tombs of Mary, Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth's sister, Queen Mary Tudor.

We were impressed by the Abbey's reminders of a favorite movie, Sir Laurence Olivier's 1944 Academy Award-winning Shakespearean epic, "Henry V". The star himself was entombed in the Abbey in 1989.

The real-life Henry V has rested in the Abbey since 1422. Author William Shakespeare is buried in his home town of Stratford Upon Avon, but there's a large statue of him near Olivier in the Abbey's Poets Corner.

The Poet's Corner also holds the tombs of Geoffrey Chaucer, Lord Byron, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling and Thomas Hardy. Other famous authors and poets are represented by memorial statues or plaques.

Because we were on a tour that included visits to several other parts of London, we were at Westminster Abbey for just two hours. We could have spent at least two days there and still not see all of the historic figures and artifacts from British history.

Just before we left, we spent several minutes of contemplation in the pews, where many visitors come daily to pray. We thought about how many others have sat in those same pews through the centuries, whether for simple prayer or to witness royal processions moving majestically along the aisles.